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## General Information

The Nevada Alternate Scales of Academic Achievement (NASAA) is the statewide assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Less than 1% of students in the state meet the strict criteria required in order to be assessed with the NASAA. The NASAA assesses student performance on academic subjects through direct observation of specific tasks by the classroom teacher. Each task is an indication of a specific academic skill which has been linked to the same grade-level content learned by all students in the state. These observations are stored in an electronic portfolio to document the student's overall progress in learning and to determine the student's performance according to alternate achievement standards. The performance portfolio is maintained by the classroom teacher, using a specialized software program called *Measured Progress ProFile*.

In accordance with state and federal requirements, all students must participate in the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program. The students who are assessed using the NASAA are also provided specialized instruction and other services as individuals with disabilities, consistent with state statutes and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), a federal law. Also, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002* (a federal law that sets high standards of achievement for schools, school districts, and states) requires that a determination of proficiency be made for all students, based on achievement in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics.

Students who are identified as requiring the specialized instruction and related services for special education must have a current Individualized Educational Program (IEP) that includes a determination about which state assessment the student requires. In Nevada, the IEP also includes a statement that the student met the criterion for participation made by the IEP committee. This criterion remains unchanged from previous years, when the alternate assessment was the *Skills and Competencies Alternate Assessment in Nevada* (SCAAN). The SCAAN is no longer used as the state alternate assessment.

Determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is required for the academic achievement of students assessed with the NASAA for English Language Arts and Mathematics, as the approved alternate form to determining academic proficiency for the state Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT) in grades 3 through 8. It is also the alternate assessment required for participation purposes for the statewide *ITED/ITED* in grades 4, 7, and 10, Writing Proficiency in grades 5 and 8, and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). Calculation of who participates in the NPEP assessments by being assessed with the NASAA as the state alternate assessment is also required for all subgroups.

### Contents of the NASAA

The NASAA includes two components. The first is a procedure for monitoring skill development throughout the school year and is called Skill Monitoring. The second is a procedure to document performance of the skill by the student, then determine a score for how accurately the student demonstrated the skill and the extent to which the student required assistance from the teacher to demonstrate the skill. This second procedure is called the Event Recording, and is conducted in the spring to coincide with the statewide administration of the CRT.

### Other Considerations for Parents and the IEP Committee

The parent or guardian of the student should be advised that the alternate assessment is a measurement based on alternate achievement standards linked to grade-level content standards, and is therefore different from what would be assessed using regular state and district-wide assessments. While the academic content is linked to grade-level standards, the degree of complexity of the skills assessed on the NASAA differs significantly. Further information about the specific content of alternate and regular statewide assessments is available to parents by referring to the Nevada Department of Education website. The address is: [www.doe.nv.gov/statetesting](http://www.doe.nv.gov/statetesting).

For students of high school age, the NASAA must be completed to demonstrate participation in the HSPE and the *ITED*. Students must complete the NASAA as the alternate to the HSPE and the *ITED*, preferably in Grade 10. However, the determination about proficiency based on results on the NASAA score for ELA and math cannot be substituted for meeting the state proficiency requirements that are assessed on the HSPE.

Students must pass all required parts of the HSPE as a prerequisite to attaining a standard high school diploma. Students with IEPs (including students assessed with the NASAA) may attain an adjusted diploma, subject to meeting the criteria identified in the student's IEP.

Currently, a student with an IEP enrolling in a high school in Nevada during Grade 10 or Grade 11, and who requires participation as a student taking the alternate assessment, must provide evidence of completing the SCAAN (during the 2004-2005 school year) or the NASAA during Grade 10 (during the 2005-2006 school year). If no such evidence is available, the student must participate in NASAA.

Finally, the determination about whether the student requires participation in the alternate assessment is reviewed annually. Students who progress to high levels of performance on the NASAA may no longer require the alternate assessment to participate in statewide assessments.

The IEP goals and benchmarks and short-term objectives for academic achievement, including ELA and mathematics, are a matter for careful consideration by the IEP committee. These considerations may include information from a previous administration of the SCAAN and/or NASAA to include in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance and whether to include a specific goal for ELA and mathematics.

**Testing Schedule (Window)**  
**NASAA Calendar for the 2005-2006 School Year**  
*(Subject to revision)*

<b>Spring Event:</b>		
12/05/05-2/24/06	Conduct event recording: 12 skills	Teachers
12/05/05-2/24/06	Spot assistance to Teachers regarding the Event Recording	NASAA Trainers
2/27-3/10/06	Compile video files and portfolios Update ProFile software Submit materials to Score Center	Teachers
3/10/06	Certify that list of teachers is complete	NASAA Trainers Local administrator
<b>NDE Score Center: (validation score)</b>		
3/10-3/20/06	Check-in materials, tag	NDE Staff
3/20-4/17/06	Conduct second score Validate disputed scores Input Scores	Teacher Scoring Team
4/17-4/28/06	Data compilation	NDE Staff
4/28/06	Score profiles reported to local school administrator	NDE Staff
4/28-5/12/06	Score profiles released to teachers	Local administrator
<b>Summary Report for Parent:</b>		
4/28-5/12/06	Update ProFile software, as necessary, with score analysis	Teacher
4/28-5/12/06	Distribute parent report as generated by ProFile	Teacher
<b>Validation, Data Analysis:</b>		
4/17-5/12/06	Audit for Exceptions, Participation Audit for Completeness Release findings to school districts	NDE Staff
5/15/06	AYP Determinations for NASAA	NDE Staff

## Who Tests and When

### Guidelines for Participation

The requirements for student participation in the NASAA as the statewide alternate assessment are specific, and documentation of the reasons that the student requires participation in the NASAA is provided in the course of developing the IEP:

1. The student is receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through a current IEP.
2. The student demonstrates cognitive ability and adaptive behavior that limits FULL participation in the general education curriculum, even with supplementary aids, accommodations, and modifications.
3. The student's level of educational performance is not primarily the result of specific learning disabilities; social, cultural, economic, or language differences; visual or auditory impairments; emotional-behavioral disabilities; or excessive or extended absences unrelated to the student's disability.
4. The student requires intensive instruction to acquire, maintain, and generalize skills necessary for application in school, home, work, and community settings.
5. The student also participates in modified, functional/academic curriculum that is not measured by general assessments.

The documentation of participation in statewide and/or district-wide assessments must be addressed as described on the July 1, 2005, revision of the Nevada State Mandated IEP. The IEP committee is required to document whether the student requires participation in each state and/or district-wide assessment for the period of the annual review (e.g., for a Grade 5 student being assessed with the NASAA the documentation must be provided for the CRT and Proficiency Writing Exam, as well as any district-wide assessment).

### Answer Documents

Each student's participation in the NASAA is confirmed through the same answer documents used for students participating in the regular assessment. It is therefore critical that all students designated for participation in the NASAA be identified on the answer document with all the required demographic and identifying information, in the same manner as for other students participating in the regular assessment. This is required for each student assessed with the NASAA as the alternate assessment for state assessments:

- Iowa Tests (*ITBS/ITED*): once, during each grade-level administration
- CRT: once, during each grade-level administration
- State Writing Proficiency: once during the administration at Grades 5 or Grade 8
- HSPE (an answer document completed for the student in Grade 10, or one in Grade 11 if NASAA/SCAAN was not documented for Grade 10)

All required fields for student information on an answer document must be completed, consistent with school district procedures. For students scheduled to be assessed with the NASAA, the **NASAA** designation is bubbled-in in the Special Considerations box on the answer document. For further questions or to obtain additional answer documents it is suggested that individuals who administer state assessments at each school site confer with the school district assessment office. Also, the designated school district special education administrator may be able to provide other assistance with local procedures to assure that each student designated for participation in the alternate assessment in the building is counted.

## **Test Materials**

The NASAA is a performance assessment with results, including video recordings that document these results, stored in an electronic portfolio. The NASAA does not “look” like a traditional pencil-and-paper test, therefore the same test security requirements as the regular state and district-wide assessments do not apply. In fact, the “items” assessed in the Event Recording are skills and concepts that have been a regular part of the student’s instruction, and have been less-formally assessed repeatedly throughout the school year.

### **Teacher Tools**

The *NASAA Training Manual and Scoring Guide* is a reference used by the classroom teacher to conduct skill monitoring and video recordings for the Spring Event. The Guide also includes a description of the scoring rubric and a number of examples of how to use the scoring rubric to assure consistent results. Validation scoring, and detailed procedures about the alternate achievement standards and cutoff scores for determining whether a score is proficient, are included in the manual.

The *Measured Progress ProFile* software is the classroom teacher’s primary tool for organizing the assessment, tracking student progress on the designated skills over time, recording the results of video recordings, and organizing the actual video “clips” obtained during the Event Recording. The software also generates a report of results for the parent, in addition to graphs and charts of the skill monitoring for use in instructional planning.

The video recording will also be documented on paper by the classroom teacher, using the *NASAA Event Recording Performance Rating Sheet*. This form includes the teacher’s ratings using the scoring rubric.

### **Reporting Results to Parents**

Reporting NASAA results for academic achievement for ELA and mathematics for individual achievement is required by NCLB. Individual reports must assist parents, teachers, and school principals in understanding and addressing specific academic needs. The parent report prepared using the *Measured Progress ProFile* was created for this purpose.

Validation or “second” scoring is a required component of the NASAA. This occurs at a score center. A final determination of the “true” score is made at this time, based on the evidence as submitted, should the classroom teacher and the second scorer disagree significantly in their ratings. The validation scoring is conducted only after all Event Recordings for the student are completed at the student’s home school and the classroom teacher has submitted scores. All Event Recordings

must be completed by the classroom teacher by **February 24, 2006**, although local district procedures will vary and it is very likely that an earlier, local deadline has been established. Further details on state reporting procedures are available in the *NASAA Training Manual and Scoring Guide*. Classroom teachers assessing with the NASAA have been given more-detailed instructions by their local designated special education administrator.

The packet of materials comprising the performance assessment is a portfolio that is compiled for each student, consisting of

- a recording of each of 12 Benchmark Skills
- an Event Recording Performance Rating Sheet for each benchmark skill
- a short written explanation and comments by the teacher regarding setting, special conditions, other pertinent information about the student
- supporting student work samples, if any
- a printout from the Measured Progress ProFile software with a graph of progress monitoring conducted to date
- any supplemental information or examples that may have a direct bearing on the student's performance on the rubric.

Final determination of scores will be tabulated by NDE, with a printout provided to the local designated special education administrator for local distribution. Once distributed to the classroom teacher, the final determination score should be noted by the classroom teacher in the applicable section of the Measured Progress ProFile software. Once entered, the teacher may print the automated Parent Report and provide the information to the parent and the IEP Committee.

The results from NASAA will also be included in the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determination made for schools, school districts, and the state. The cut-off scores for proficiency will be established by a standards-setting process conducted in March, 2006. The “weight” of a student's score on the NASAA will be identical to the “weight” for a student assessed with the regular assessment in setting school-level AYP. Results for students assessed on the NASAA will be included in other student scores for public reports of overall school, school district, and state outcomes.

### **Preparing Students for Testing**

Preparation for the NASAA is unlike preparing for a pencil and paper test, because the student is being tested according to an actual sample of performance as the student demonstrates a number of specific tasks. The student performance is recorded so that it may be observed by another teacher trained in the scoring rubric, to assure consistency. Standard and consistent ratings among teachers in reporting results are therefore critical.

Teachers will plan well ahead and have received training for both the skill monitoring and the event recording components of the NASAA. This planning generally starts with discussion and recommendations from the IEP committee. Standardized testing conditions will be used to the extent practical. Every effort will be made to provide a familiar setting most appropriate for the student. It will be important to assess the student under the same conditions in order to establish a reliable and valid measure of growth. Assessing students may require several sessions over several days, and frequent “re-takes” to assure that the final video recording includes the student's best work.

## Definition of Common Terms for NASAA

**Academic Content Standard:** specifies what all students are expected to know and be able to do within grade-level content areas.

**Academic Achievement Standard:** establishes an expectation for how well students must perform on grade-level assessments to be considered proficient.

**Alternate Content Standard:** establishes an expectation of what students should be able to know and be able to do that differs in depth and complexity from the expectations for other students at a particular grade level.

**Alternate Achievement Standard:** an expectation of performance that differs in complexity from the grade-level achievement standard. The NCLB regulations note that a state is permitted to use alternate achievement standards to evaluate the performance of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and to use these standards in calculating the school, school district, and state AYP determination.

**Alternate Assessment:** assessment designed for the small number of students with disabilities who are unable to participate in the regular state assessment, even with appropriate accommodations. Further, the assessment must be aligned with the state's content standards, must yield results separately in both reading/language arts and mathematics, and must be implemented in a manner that supports use of the results as an indicator of AYP.